



---

**BOARD OF CORRECTIONS MEETING – NOVEMBER 2015**

**Meeting.** The Board of Corrections met November 6, 2015, in Des Moines. Director Jerry Bartruff updated the Board on significant activities:

- The Governor's work group on Criminal Justice Police Reform has submitted its Final Strategy Recommendations. The specific areas studied by the group were mental health and drug courts, the jury pool selection process, juvenile delinquency records, and prison and jail phone rate fees. Those recommendations are available at: [Governor's Working Group Final Recommendations](#). Public comment will be collected by the Governor's office and legislative proposals may result. Out of the four areas, phone rates were the most pertinent to the Department of Corrections (DOC). Any proposal that lessens revenue from phone calls will impact funds available for education programs, but it is crucial that family contact with inmates is maintained. The DOC is also planning to work with advocacy groups and the Ombudsman's Office to improve visitation policies as family involvement is proven to reduce recidivism.
- After an investigation at the Anamosa State Prison, several guards have been dismissed and four have been charged with smuggling cell phones to prisoners and unlawful drug possession. This investigation was held in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office. Mr. Bartruff noted that this small segment is not representative of the whole work force.
- A group of about 60 veterans are involved with the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs and the inmates at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center (IMCC) at Oakdale to assist in benefits being restored when a veteran is released from a correctional institution.
- The Director would like to increase collaboration and partnership with the Parole Board to manage and possibly decrease the prison population. Attendance at a conference in Washington, D.C. later in November will yield national parole information from other states. The DOC wants to reduce the prison population, but at the same time be consistent with the needs of public safety.
- The issue of restrictive housing (solitary confinement) usage for punishment and behavior modification is becoming an important national issue as it has detrimental effects on the psychological health of offenders. Incentives need to be provided for release from restrictive housing.
- On October 12, there was a preservice training for correctional officers and nursing staff. An additional training session will be held soon for additional new staff.
- Michael Edwards, a beloved DOC employee, recently passed away and his office has been dedicated as the Michael Edwards Conference Room.
- Beth Lenstra has been hired as Deputy Director of Administration and will be a great addition to the DOC Central Office with her previous corrections and legislative experience.
- The Director met with AFSCME representatives and reached an agreement on overtime gender issues relating to the Prison Rape Elimination Act as an interpretation of standards had changed.
- The Iowa Corrections Association held their fall conference in Dubuque and about 110 staff attended.

**Toastmasters.** Toastmaster member Don Wadleigh helped to start a Toastmasters Club at the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility about 18 months ago. Two volunteers work with the prisoners that are running the Changing Winds Club. One of the volunteers, Joan Johanson, was present and stated that she has seen prisoners exhibit positive change within three months. Nationally, it has been shown that prisoners involved with Toastmasters have a much lower recidivism rate of 10.0%. Mr. Wadleigh heads a group of volunteers working with DOC staff to start prison clubs. Besides the Fort Dodge Club, there is a Club at the Iowa State Penitentiary (Conscious Communicators), and volunteers are working to get clubs in Newton, Oakdale, and Anamosa. Additional funding is needed to expand the Program.

**Psychiatric Manifestations and Treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury.** Dr. Harbans Deol briefly discussed the increasing costs of health care and prescription drugs, and the challenges of providing care to inmates entering the correctional system with increasing illness issues. Many times, local jails will transport patients to state institutions rather than keeping them at the local level because of the health

issues involved. The number of pregnant inmates has doubled, as well as the number of inmates needing dialysis. The prison population is aging, with chronic disease an increasing issue. There is also the question of how inmates will continue treatment and afford prescription drugs upon release and reentry into society. Additionally, mental health concerns are increasing. The DOC has been focusing on building a strong mental health team over the last few years. One new addition is Dr. Jerome Greenfield, formerly from Mercy Iowa and current President of the Iowa Psychiatric Society. Dr. Greenfield is located at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville. Dr. Greenfield addressed the Board and stated that traumatic brain injury is not only being seen more often with veterans returning from active duty, but also with an older population in their late 50s resulting from cumulative blows to the brain and oxygen deprivation from either heroine or meth usage. Dr. Greenfield is focusing on identifying these individuals and treating them. This is a psychiatric problem versus an organic or brain development problem. Initially, it is important to rule out a medical issue. The prison population as a whole has a greater percentage of individuals with psychiatric issues compared to the general population. At Mitchellville, 7.0% of the prison population is currently taking psychiatric medications, and at least half of the women have some type of anxiety problem.

**Crisis Negotiator Competition.** There was a conference held on October 21 in Bettendorf that was co-sponsored by the Iowa State Patrol and the DOC for crisis negotiators. On October 22, they held a competition. The conference was completely self-funded by those participating. The main speaker at the conference was Lt. Jerry Lohr of the St. Louis County Police Department. Lt. Lohr supervised security at the Ferguson, Missouri Police Department. The conference and competition has been growing in participation. In 2013, there were seven teams of 45 participants, in 2014 there were 10 teams with 64 participants, and this year there were 14 teams with 101 participants. This year, the winning team was the Iowa State Patrol from the eastern region of the state, second place went to the IMCC team from Oakdale, and third place went to the Newton Correctional Facility. Steps are being taken to establish the Iowa Association of Crisis Negotiators that will eventually take over planning for the annual conference and competition.

**Statewide Recidivism Reduction Update.** Project Manager Beth Skinner gave an update on the Statewide Recidivism Reduction Initiative. A Quality Assurance contract has been finalized and work continues. Site visits will be conducted on November 23 and November 24. The Board will be updated on progress during a presentation at the January 2016 meeting. Social media links for the Statewide Recidivism Reduction Initiative are available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Iowa-Statewide-Recidivism-Reduction-Initiative/903191956414305?pnref=lhs>; twitter: <http://twitter.com/statewideRecid>; and YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McT4zy75\\_cQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McT4zy75_cQ).

**Public Comments.** Jean Basinger, Iowa Cure and Justice Reform Consortium, stated that as a longtime supporter of the STAR Program at Mitchellville (Sister's Together Achieving Recovery) she was concerned that it was being phased out. Director Bartruff stated that this issue will be added to the agenda for the January meeting.

Dan Homan, President of AFSCME Council #61 introduced a group of 16 correctional officers attending the meeting. Mr. Homan stated that staffing is at a critical situation, and while staffing has trended downward over the last several years, the total number of inmates has increased. Mr. Homan asserted that this is the same situation at every correctional institution and community-based correctional facility in Iowa. Mr. Homan implored the Board to work with the Governor to increase staffing. There was a prison riot recently in Ohio, a serious situation at our own Iowa State Penitentiary, and there is a fear that someone will get seriously hurt or killed eventually because of understaffing. In 2005, there was a national study that showed Iowa's institutions were understaffed at that time.

**Next Meeting.** The next Board meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2016, in Des Moines. For additional information, see the DOC website: <http://www.doc.state.ia.us/BoardOfCorrections>.

**STAFF CONTACT:** Alice Fulk Wisner (515-281-6301) [alice.wisner@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:alice.wisner@legis.iowa.gov)